



Exploring the Tea Cultivation Heritage of Jalpaiguri District from 1864 to 1947

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20095664>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 20-04-2026

Published: 10-05-2026

Keywords:

British Colonialism, Labor Conditions, Women Workers, Environmental Impact, Indian Entrepreneurs, Dooars Region

ABSTRACT

This study explores the historical development of tea plantations in Jalpaiguri District, North Bengal, from 1864 to 1947, under British colonial rule. It examines the establishment and expansion of tea estates in the Dooars region, highlighting the contributions of Indian entrepreneurs and the socioeconomic impacts on local communities. The research focuses on labour conditions, particularly the exploitation and cultural trauma of women workers, and environmental challenges, including deforestation, river shifting, and soil erosion. By analysing archival records and historical accounts, this study illuminates the transformation of Jalpaiguri's tea industry and its enduring legacy in shaping the region's economy and ecology.

Introduction: The history of tea cultivation in India is deeply rooted in colonial enterprise, with Jalpaiguri District emerging as a key center in North Bengal from 1864 to 1947. While tea originated in China, its commercial cultivation in India was driven by British efforts to exploit the region's fertile lands. North Bengal's economy relies on three key sectors: tea, timber, and tourism. Within this framework, Jalpaiguri, particularly the Dooars region, became a hub for tea plantations following British intervention. Initially characterized by wastelands and poor communication networks, the region underwent significant transformation as tea estates were established, reshaping its socioeconomic and environmental landscape.

Location: Jalpaiguri is situated between 26°02'35.2" and 26°59'23.02" north latitudes, and between 88°22'40.2" and 89°55'20.2" east longitudes, in northeastern part of India, in the state of West Bengal (Das Gupta, 1986). It is situated near the foothills of the Himalayan region to the North and the Dooars region to the south (Ghosh, B.C.).ⁱ



History of tea: Although the history of tea has not always been widely accepted, folklore suggest that tea originated in china and that the term tea is a combination of the Chinese dialects that is chia or cha. In 2737 BC, a Chinese monarch named Sheh Nung is said to have discovered tea by accidently when a tea leaf fell into a bowl of hot, boiling water while he was in the garden next to a tea tree (Hunter, 1876). He was interested by the brown liquid and as a scientist and art enthusiast, drank some finding it to be quite refreshing. The beverage that was produced from the camellia Sinensis tree is today known as tea (Arya, N. 2013). Soon after the creation of tea, its production spread throughout the Chinese culture reaching into every aspect of society. ⁱⁱ

History of Tea in India: Even if native plants have long been there and are flourishing widely in some Assamese hills, the development of the tea business in India is rather new (Roy, 2011). Only because of the British Empire's sincere efforts was it able to cultivate tea on Indian soil (Saha, 1999). To make east india company more thriving the governor general of India Lord Waren Hasting tried persistently (Sarkar, 2018). Under Joseph Bank a naturalist give report to Hastings on the possibilities of crops in india in 1778 (Sarkar & Bhowmik, 1998). In 1819, Mr. David Scott, the than governor general of Assam tried to cultivate tea in Assam region (Sen, 1999).

History of Tea in West Bengal: The economy of North Bengal is heavily dependent on three key sectors: tea, timber, and tourism. There are three main regions in West Bengal where tea is cultivated: Darjeeling, Terai, and Dooars. Among these, Darjeeling tea is famous worldwide for its distinctive flavour and is regarded as one of the finest and most valuable teas globally. West Bengal is the second-largest tea-producing state in India, after Assam, contributing 22% of both the area under tea cultivation and the nation's total tea production. The tea industry in West Bengal has a history spanning 146 years, with tea cultivation first starting in the Darjeeling hills. In 1835, a botanist named Mr. Garden brought back tea seeds and seedlings from China to be distributed for experimental planting in various hilly regions, including Darjeeling. Dr. Campbell conducted the first experiment in 1841 by planting Chinese tea seeds in the Alubari and Jalpahar areas, at an altitude of 7000 feet (Ghosh, T. K.1997). Unfortunately, this attempt failed due to the harsh climatic conditions at higher elevations. However, Mr. Cronemelin's experimental nursery at Lebong, situated at a lower altitude, proved to be successful. In the following years, tea cultivation steadily progressed, particularly in Darjeeling's lower elevations. By 1856, the tea industry had firmly established itself as a commercial venture, with the first tea garden in Darjeeling opening at Alubari, under the Kurseong and Darjeeling Tea Company. By 1874, there were 113 tea gardens covering 18,888 acres of land, with notable gardens such as Makaibari, Pandam, Ging, Ambote, Takdawn, and Phubsering emerging during this period. ⁱⁱⁱ



History of Tea in Jalpaiguri region: Jalpaiguri, originally inhabited by indigenous tribes and shaped by the Kamrupa and Pala kingdoms, emerged as a pivotal tea cultivation hub under British colonial rule from 1864 to 1947. The British East India Company, driven by the goal of rivaling Chinese tea exports and strengthening imperial trade, established Jalpaiguri as a district in 1869 to exploit its strategic location near trade routes and the fertile Terai and Dooars regions. In 1871, under Mr. Becket's administration, the colonial government declared the Dooars an unregulated area, categorizing land into agricultural, reserved forest, and tea cultivation zones to capitalize on its ideal soil and climate (Hunter, 1876). Tea planting began in 1864 at Gajoldoba, led by European planters like Dr. Brougham, who appointed R. Haughton as manager to implement advanced techniques, including soil preparation, irrigation, and transport networks (Hunter, 1876). By 1876, British-led estates such as Fulbari, Bagracote, Dalimcote, and Rangati were established, integrating Jalpaiguri into global tea markets through companies like Duncan Brothers, who later managed Chalouni, Caron, Meenglass, and Hope. This study argues that British initiatives prioritized profit over labor welfare and environmental sustainability, setting a precedent for exploitative practices and ecological challenges that persisted throughout the colonial period. ^{iv}

The British reliance on migrant laborers from Chota Nagpur—Santhals, Oraons, and Mundas—underpinned the industry's growth but caused profound cultural trauma. Uprooted from their ancestral lands, these workers lived in isolated plantation settlements, with limited access to traditional practices, languages, and social networks. The colonial “family system” aimed to stabilize the workforce by relocating entire families, but it severed cultural ties, exacerbating workers' vulnerability in an alien environment. Archival records suggest laborers preserved some cultural identity through festivals, but plantation structures often suppressed these efforts, contributing to long-term alienation (Das Gupta, 1986). This study posits that the British focus on monoculture tea production, driven by global demand, led to environmental degradation, including deforestation of the Baikunthapur forest, river shifting (e.g., the Teesta's 1867 flood), and soil erosion, which marginalized indigenous communities and disrupted local ecosystems. ^v

Indian entrepreneurs began diversifying the tea industry by 1877, with Munsif Rahim Baksh securing land grants for Jaldhaka and Altadanga, followed by Biharlal Ganguly, a timber merchant, who established Betbari, Bamandanga, Elenbari, Damdim, Kumlai, and Wanabari. In 1878, estates like Goodhope, Ranichera, Manabari, Balabari, Chayel, Patabari, and Manihope emerged, reflecting growing Indian involvement. By 1879, Bhagaban Chandra Basu, father of Jagadish Chandra Bose and then deputy magistrate, supported the Mogalkata tea garden and the Jalpaiguri Tea Company Limited,



with directors Shreenath Chakrabarti, Jaychandra Sanyal, Gopal Chandra Ghosh, Mahima Chandra Ghosh, and Jadab Chandra Chakrabarti (Bhattacharya, Ajitesh, 1987). Additional estates, including Rupni, Sungachhi, Washabari, Nagrakata, and Bamandanga (extension), extended tea cultivation from the Teesta to near Bhutan, marking significant regional growth.

The 1880s saw rapid expansion, with British estates like Hayhaypara, Odlabari, Baitagul, Newranadi, Caron, Nageshwari, Juranti, Murti, Kilkot, Nidim, Matiali, Chulsa, Sundry, Alston, Banks, and Sayli, and Indian ventures like Malnadi (1886) by Bibi Rahiman Nesa on 329 hectares and Chamurchi (1891) by Rahim Baksh (Ghosh, T.K., 1997). In 1882, Indian planters formed the Northern Bengal Tea Corporation, while Duncan Brothers expanded with estates like Jeeti and Chalouni. In 1886, Mr. Duncan, impressed by Chalouni, acquired shares, strengthening the company's influence (Mitra, 2010). The 1889 Anjuman Tea Company, a Hindu-Muslim joint venture involving Sanyal, Ghosh, Shrinath Roy, and Munsif Abdul Hamid, marked a milestone in Indian innovation within colonial constraints. Other 1889 estates included Haldibari, Chengmari, Grassmore, and Saogaon, followed by Goerkata, Telepara, Hantapara, and Sujnai in 1890 (Bhattacharya, Ajitesh, 1987).^{vi}

From 1892 to 1895, estates like Totapara, Bandapani, Lankapara, Chunabhati, Hartalguri, Dudumari, Gendrapara, Kathalguri, Subhasini, Nakati, Rangamati, Chuwapara, Torsha, Jayanti, Banarhat, and Karbala were established, with Shrinath Roy and Tariniprasad Roy leading Kathalguri (Sarkar & Bhowmik, 1998). In 1896, Rahim Baksh opened Rahima Baj and Chuniyajhora, while Duncan Brothers established Kumargram, Phanskhawa, Jayanti, Haldibari, and Baradighi. Hasimara, Boxduar, and Birpara tea companies also emerged. In 1899, Moulavi Musharraf Hossain, Rahim Baksh's son-in-law, and Bibi Noorjan secured grants for Atiyabari and Binnaguri, and L. McLeod and Company opened Bhatkhawa in 1900 (Arya, 2013). By 1907, Dhumchipara and Ramjhora were founded by Gopal Chandra Ghosh, Sashi Kumar Niyogi, Waliur Rahman, and Musharraf Hossain, with Ghosh as managing director (Roy, 2011).

The early 20th century saw continued growth, with estates like Diana and Turturi (1910), Gournitai, Manmohinipur, and Cornation (1912), and Hallmari and New Assam (1913) established by Indian planters, though World War I slowed progress (Banerjee, 1989). In 1913, estates like Dhawalajhora, Hossainbaz, Dheklapara, Palashbari, Bihabari, and Paitkapara were founded by figures like Purnachandra Roy, Rajendra Kumar Niyogi, and Waliur Rahman. Raja Prasannadev Raikat opened Shikarpur and Bhandarpur in 1917, building on the earlier Denguajhar estate in Baikunthpur (Besky, 2014). In 1921, Moraghat, Hantapara, and Red Bank were established, followed by Bijaynagar (1924)



under Yogesh Chandra Ghosh, with capital from broker J. Thomas, and Anandpur (1925) by Anand Chandra Rahut (Ghosh, 1869-1986). This study contends that while British planters laid the industry’s foundation through strategic land policies and global trade, their monoculture practices caused environmental degradation—deforestation, river shifting, and soil erosion—and exploited laborers, while Indian entrepreneurs diversified the sector, shaping a complex socioeconomic and ecological legacy for Jalpaiguri’s tea heritage. ^{vii}

Year	Event
1864	British start tea cultivation in Gajoldoba.
1874	First European tea plantations established in Dooars.
1877	First Indian land grant for tea given to Munsii Rahim Baksh.
1889	Anjuman Tea Company founded as a Hindu-Muslim joint venture.
1917	Raja Prasannadev Raikat supports tea plantation expansion in Terai.
1921	Waterlogging issues arise in tea gardens, affecting productivity.
1924	Indian tea growers open Bijaynagar tea estate in Terai.
1930	Environmental degradation and river shifting cause damage to estates.

Labor Conditions and Cultural Trauma: The tea industry in Jalpaiguri, established by British colonial authorities in 1864, relied heavily on a labour force drawn from marginalized communities, particularly Adivasi and Nepali migrants, whose working conditions and cultural displacement shaped a challenging legacy. British planters, driven by the East India Company’s goal to meet global tea demand, implemented a labour-intensive plantation system that prioritized productivity over worker welfare. Laborers were primarily recruited from the central Indian plateau, notably the Chota Nagpur region, encompassing tribes like the Santhals, Oraons, and Mundas. This recruitment, orchestrated through colonial intermediaries known as “sardars,” targeted impoverished communities, luring them with



promises of steady wages but delivering harsh realities. The British “family system” relocated entire families to ensure a stable workforce, but this practice uprooted labourers from their ancestral lands, severing ties to cultural practices, languages, and social networks. This study argues that such displacement caused profound cultural trauma, as workers were confined to isolated plantation settlements, often called “coolie lines,” with minimal access to their traditional rituals or community structures. Archival records from the Jalpaiguri District Administration indicate that labourers attempted to preserve their cultural identity through festivals like the Karam Puja, but the plantation system’s rigid schedules and surveillance suppressed these efforts, fostering a sense of alienation that persisted across generations. ^{viii}

Women workers, constituting a significant portion of the labour force, faced particularly exploitative conditions. British planters valued women for their perceived “nimble fingers,” assigning them the labour-intensive task of plucking tea leaves, which required precision and endurance (Saha, 1999). Women worked long hours—often 10 to 12 hours daily—under strict supervision, with overseers employing verbal abuse and occasional physical punishment to enforce quotas. Wages were abysmally low, often half those of male workers, despite women performing the majority of fieldwork. For example, archival data from the Gajoldoba estate in the 1880s shows women earned approximately one anna per day compared to two annas for men, with no adjustments for inflation or workload. Housing was inadequate, with cramped, poorly ventilated huts lacking sanitation, leading to widespread health issues like malaria and dysentery. Maternity benefits were virtually non-existent, forcing pregnant women to return to work shortly after childbirth, often without childcare support. This study posits that the systemic exploitation of women workers entrenched gender inequalities, as colonial policies prioritized cost-cutting over humane treatment, a legacy that shaped labour dynamics in the Dooars region (Bhadra, 1992). ^{ix}

The environmental and social isolation of tea estates further exacerbated labourers’ hardships. Plantations like Fulbari and Nagrakata, established in the 1870s, were located in remote areas, far from markets or medical facilities, leaving workers dependent on estate management for basic needs (Banerjee, 1989). The British practice of monoculture tea cultivation, driven by global market demands, led to deforestation and soil erosion, which indirectly impacted labourers by increasing vulnerability to floods and waterborne diseases, as seen in the Teesta’s 1867 flood. Workers faced human-wildlife conflicts, particularly with elephants, as deforestation disrupted habitats, posing risks to their safety. Food rations were meagre, often consisting of low-quality rice and lentils, and malnutrition was rampant, particularly among children (Banerjee, 1989). The colonial administration’s neglect of labour



welfare was evident in the lack of educational facilities, with most workers’ children denied schooling, perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependence on plantation labour.^x

This study argues that the British colonial framework, which established Jalpaiguri’s tea industry, created a labour system designed for maximum profit at the expense of human dignity and cultural identity. While Indian entrepreneurs like Munsiri Rahim Baksh and Biharlal Ganguly, who entered the industry in the 1870s, occasionally advocated for better conditions, their influence was limited by colonial regulations. Resistance efforts, such as small-scale strikes in estates like Jaldhaka in the 1890s, were documented but often suppressed by British managers (Ghosh and Sarkar, 2011). The cultural trauma of displacement, combined with exploitative working conditions, left a lasting impact on labourers, whose descendants continued to navigate the socioeconomic challenges of plantation life. By 1947, the tea industry’s labour system, rooted in British colonial policies, had entrenched inequalities that would persist into the post-colonial era, underscoring the need for reforms to address both worker welfare and cultural preservation in Jalpaiguri’s tea heritage.^{xi}

Year	Workers in '000 (F)	Workers in '000 (M)	Workforce as % of population (F)	Workforce as % of population (M)	Sex ratio of workers (females per 1000 males)
1881	1827	11172	10.1	61.4	164
1901	1697	12793	8.2 (31.7)	59.5 (61.9)	138
1911	1947	13972	8.8 (33.7)	57.8 (61.9)	152
1921	2058	14063	9.1 (32.7)	58.2 (60.5)	155
1931	1792	12398	7.4 (27.6)	47.6 (58.3)	156

Environmental Hazards: Jalpaiguri district, located in the foothills of the Himalayas, witnessed significant environmental changes between 1865 and the 1930s due to both natural processes and human interventions. The region, known as the ‘Terai’ or ‘Dooars’ underwent rapid transformation during British colonial rule as tea plantations expanded and infrastructure development intensified. These changes led to severe environmental hazards, including deforestation, river shifting, soil erosion, and water contamination, all of which had long-term consequences on the local ecology and communities (Das and Chattopadhyay, 1979).



One of the major environmental concerns during this period was the shifting of rivers. The district is home to several rivers such as the Teesta, Jaldhaka, Torsa, and Diana, which originate from the Himalayas. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, extensive deforestation in the upper catchment areas, driven by British logging activities, altered river courses significantly. The sudden flattening of slopes when rivers descended from the hills to the plains resulted in heavy sedimentation, increasing the height of riverbeds. This led to frequent flooding and river shifting, causing extensive damage to tea plantations, forests, and human settlements. Historical records indicate that the great flood of 1867 drastically altered the Teesta's course, forcing local communities to relocate. By the 1920s, the Jaldhaka and Torsha rivers also changed their paths, eroding fertile lands and displacing settlements (Das and Chattopadhyay, 1979).^{xii}

Deforestation was another critical issue in the region during this period. The dense forests of the Terai and Dooars were systematically cleared to make way for tea estates, railway lines, and roads. Large tracts of forest were felled under British policies that prioritized economic gain over environmental sustainability. As a result, the destruction of forests led to an imbalance in the local climate, increased instances of soil erosion, and a decline in biodiversity. The Baikunthapur forest, for example, witnessed a sharp decline in tree cover as timber extraction peaked in the late 19th century. Additionally, excessive logging in the Bhutan foothills, encouraged by British merchants, contributed to severe sedimentation in local rivers, further exacerbating flooding and soil degradation (Das and Chattopadhyay, 1982).

Soil erosion became a significant challenge in Jalpaiguri as the tea industry expanded. With the removal of natural vegetation, large portions of fertile topsoil were washed away, especially during heavy monsoon seasons. The construction of roads and railway lines using crude excavation methods destabilized slopes, making them prone to landslides. In hilly areas, the widespread use of slash-and-burn techniques for clearing land weakened the soil structure, further increasing erosion risks. Colonial agricultural policies also played a role in soil degradation, as monoculture tea plantations replaced diverse natural vegetation, stripping the land of essential nutrients. By the early 20th century, the loss of fertile soil had become a pressing concern for local farmers and estate owners alike (Das and Chattopadhyay, 1982).

Water contamination emerged as a major environmental hazard during this time. The extensive use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and insecticides in tea gardens began in the early 1900s, affecting both surface and groundwater quality. These chemicals seeped into the soil and polluted underground aquifers, which were the primary source of drinking water for workers and nearby communities.



Rainwater runoff carried toxic substances into rivers and lakes, further exacerbating water pollution. Historical accounts suggest that outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera and dysentery were common in tea garden settlements during this period (Das and Chattopadhyay, 1982). In some areas, particularly near the Bhutan border, unregulated dolomite mining activities contributed to a rise in water hardness levels, affecting both drinking water and irrigation practices.

The ecological disturbances in Jalpaiguri also resulted in increased human-wildlife conflicts. As deforestation intensified, wild elephants and other animals lost their natural habitats and began encroaching on human settlements. Archival reports from the 1890s document frequent elephant raids on tea estates, causing damage to crops and property. The disruption of wildlife corridors due to expanding settlements and infrastructure projects made it difficult for animals to migrate safely, increasing conflict between humans and wildlife (Das and Chattopadhyay, 1982).^{xiii}

The environmental hazards in Jalpaiguri had far-reaching socio-economic consequences. The degradation of land and water resources led to declining agricultural yields, forcing many workers and small landowners into debt and poverty. The British administration's focus on commercial tea production further marginalized local communities, as traditional farming practices were pushed aside in favor of plantation economies. Poor waste management practices in tea gardens also contributed to deteriorating health conditions among workers. Many estates lacked proper drainage systems, and the absence of sanitary facilities led to unsanitary living conditions (Ghosh, T.K 1997). Consequently, diseases such as malaria, typhoid, and tuberculosis became prevalent in tea garden settlements, affecting labour productivity and overall well-being. To address these environmental hazards, colonial administrators implemented some measures, but they were largely inadequate. Attempts to construct embankments and flood control systems were sporadic and often ineffective. Afforestation efforts were minimal, and little attention was given to sustainable land-use practices. The British government primarily prioritized economic interests over environmental concerns, leaving local communities to bear the brunt of ecological degradation (Ghosh, T.K 1997).

The period between 1865 and the 1930s marked a significant phase of environmental transformation in Jalpaiguri, driven by deforestation, river shifting, soil erosion, water contamination, and human-wildlife conflicts. These hazards, largely a consequence of British colonial policies and rapid economic expansion, had lasting effects on the region's ecology and its people. Understanding this historical perspective is crucial in shaping present-day conservation efforts and ensuring that past mistakes are not repeated (Ghosh, T.K 1997).^{xiv}



Globalization and its impact on tea: Globalization has significantly transformed the Indian tea industry, bringing both opportunities and challenges. The process of globalization, which gained momentum in India after the economic reforms of 1991, has deeply influenced the tea sector, particularly through the policies of the World Trade Organization (WTO). As a founding member of the WTO, India has had to adapt to global trade rules, which have opened the economy to foreign competition and investment. While this has created new opportunities, it has also exposed the tea industry to intense competition from other tea-producing nations, leading to a decline in prices and profitability (Mitra, D., 2010).

One of the most noticeable effects of globalization on the Indian tea industry has been the fluctuation in tea prices. Before globalization, the Indian tea market was relatively stable, with prices reflecting domestic demand and production. However, after the removal of trade barriers under WTO agreements, cheaper tea from countries like Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Indonesia began to enter the Indian market. This influx of low-cost tea created an oversupply, driving down prices and making it difficult for Indian tea producers to compete. At the same time, multinational companies like Coca-Cola and Pepsi capitalized on the open market to promote soft drinks, which became increasingly popular, especially among younger consumers (Mitra, D., 2010). This shift in consumer preference further reduced the demand for tea, exacerbating the price decline and putting additional pressure on the industry.

The decline in tea prices has had a ripple effect across the entire supply chain, from tea growers to workers. Small tea growers and bought-leaf factories, which have proliferated in recent years, have contributed to the oversupply of tea in the domestic market. In North Bengal alone, the number of small tea growers has increased significantly, leading to a surplus of green leaf production. While this has provided livelihood opportunities for many, it has also created challenges in maintaining quality standards. The blending of low-quality imported tea with

Indian tea for re-export has further damaged the reputation of Indian tea in international markets, leading to a decline in export earnings (Mitra, D., 2010).

Globalization has also impacted the export performance of the Indian tea industry. Despite being one of the largest tea producers in the world, India has seen a steady decline in tea exports over the past few decades. Countries like Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, which produce less tea than India, have captured a larger share of the global tea trade by focusing on quality and branding. These countries have invested in modern production techniques and aggressive marketing strategies, allowing them to



dominate the premium tea market. In contrast, India has struggled to keep up with these advancements, leading to a loss of market share and reduced competitiveness (Mitra, D., 2010).

Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) imposed by importing countries have further complicated the situation for Indian tea exporters. These barriers, which include strict regulations on pesticide residues and labour practices, have made it difficult for Indian tea to meet international standards. Allegations of child labor in the tea industry have also tarnished India's image, leading to reduced demand for its tea in key markets. As a result, Indian tea exporters have faced significant challenges in maintaining their presence in the global market, leading to a decline in export volumes and revenues (Mitra, D., 2010).^{xv}

The impact of globalization is not limited to prices and exports; it has also affected the labor dynamics within the tea industry. The Indian tea industry is highly labor-intensive, with a large workforce employed in tea gardens across the country. However, the economic pressures caused by globalization have led to cost-cutting measures, including reduced employment opportunities and stagnant wages. In regions like Dooars and Terai, where tea cultivation is a major economic activity, workers have faced significant hardships due to the closure of tea gardens and the lack of new job opportunities. The decline in profitability has also affected the provision of welfare facilities for workers, leading to deteriorating industrial relations and frequent labour unrest (Das Gupta 1986).

Globalization has also prompted changes in labor laws, with amendments aimed at making the industry more competitive. However, these changes have often come at the expense of workers' rights. For example, amendments to the Trade Unions Act and the Payment of Wages Act have increased the responsibilities of employers while reducing the bargaining power of workers. The lack of strong labour unions and the prevalence of casual labor have further weakened the position of workers, making it difficult for them to advocate for better wages and working conditions (Das Gupta 1986).^{xvi}

The tea industry in India, particularly in regions like North Bengal, has a rich history dating back to the mid-19th century when British colonial efforts-initiated tea cultivation. Over time, tea became a major commercial enterprise, contributing significantly to the region's economy. However, the challenges brought by globalization have threatened this legacy. The industry must now focus on improving tea quality, adopting modern technologies, and building strong brands to remain competitive in the global market. At the same time, it must address labour concerns and ensure fair working conditions for its workforce. By balancing tradition with innovation, the Indian tea industry can navigate the complexities of globalization and secure a sustainable future (Ghosh, T.K., 1987).^{xvii}



Conclusion: The history of the tea industry in Jalpaiguri reflects its deep connection to colonial rule, economic changes, and labor struggles. The British introduced tea plantations in the 19th century, using the region's fertile land for commercial gain. Over time, Indian entrepreneurs also joined the industry, but the system remained exploitative, especially for workers. Women, who formed a large part of the workforce, faced low wages, long hours, and poor living conditions. Despite laws ensuring fair wages, many inequalities still exist today. The environmental impact of tea plantations has been severe. Large-scale deforestation to make way for tea estates led to soil erosion, river shifting, and frequent floods. The heavy use of chemicals in tea gardens has polluted water sources, affecting both workers and local communities. The loss of forests has also disturbed wildlife, leading to more human-animal conflicts. These environmental issues, rooted in colonial policies, continue to affect the region. Globalization has brought both opportunities and challenges to Jalpaiguri's tea industry. While international trade opened new markets, competition from other tea producing countries led to lower prices and financial struggles for Indian tea growers. Large multinational companies dominate the market, making it harder for small growers to survive. Many tea estates have also cut costs by reducing wages and jobs, making life difficult for workers. To secure the future of the tea industry in Jalpaiguri, several changes are needed. Better wages and working conditions for labourers, particularly women, should be ensured. Sustainable farming methods must be adopted to protect the environment. Indian tea producers should focus on improving quality and branding to compete globally. By addressing these issues, the tea industry can achieve long-term growth while protecting both workers and the environment.

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